

NEW ZEALAND LIBRARIES

BULLETIN OF THE N.Z. LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, INC.

Vol 19 No. 4

June 1956

Secretary: Miss D. G. Bibby P.O. Box 5103, Wellington
Hon. Secretary: W. J. McEldowney National Library Service, Wgtn.
Hon. Editor: J. A. Frampton Alexander Turnbull Library, Wgtn.

CONTENTS

<i>Reference work in special New Zealand Collections</i>	89
<i>National and State Library development (concluded)</i>	93
<i>Reading Public Library Reports</i>	97
<i>Provision of Foreign Language Books</i>	102
<i>Letters to the Editor</i>	106
<i>Fiction List</i>	110

REFERENCE WORK IN SPECIAL NEW ZEALAND COLLECTIONS

NOLA MILLAR

NEW ZEALAND historical writings in all fields average about forty a year, a figure which does not include the lesser crop of histories—parish, school, and business firm.* To this number must be added the vast yield of periodical literature and unpublished work in projects and theses. For this large output, most writers have called upon the resources of the special New Zealand collections in the country and

* A list, omitting most school and church jubilee pamphlets, covering the years 1948–1954, totals 265 published works.

This paper was presented at the Seminar for Librarians of New Zealand Collections held at the N.Z.L.A. Conference, Christchurch, 23rd February 1956.

upon the services of their Reference staff, to guide them beyond the obvious sources in which material may be found. In New Zealand collections, open access to all the book stock is the exception. Where then is the layman to start? It is the concern of the Reference Librarian not to find the answers for research students but to lead them to source material.

Reference librarians are in the position of continually compiling small subject bibliographies to supplement the general bibliographic aids. As I see it, the Reference Librarian has a first duty to investigate thoroughly the resources of his own library, then to record material found for current requests, and as far as possible anticipate future demands by noting unlikely sources of information as he comes upon them. For many reasons he should, as an auxiliary to the library's main catalogues, compile a Reference Catalogue which gives brief bibliographical notes of material found.

Our first need is to develop aids to research within our own library. With material information scattered so widely in newspapers, pamphlets, manuscripts, and books, the research student in New Zealand has to cast a very wide net. The Reference Librarian guides the student to sources beyond those listed in the author and subject catalogues. With so few assistants trained specifically in New Zealand work, we need to develop special reference aids to help our juniors and our successors so that they need not climb laboriously the same steep ascent we ourselves may have made.

My predecessor as Reference Librarian at the Alexander Turnbull Library, Miss Alice Woodhouse, is a remarkable woman. She knew New Zealand history well and the library's resources better. For many reference enquiries she could go directly to the right source. But she took her knowledge with her. As her successor, meeting many of the same, or similar enquiries, I had to start at the beginning. There was no record of past work done. So that junior and future members of the staff could use the information I had gathered, and build on my work, I concentrated on filing in the Reference Catalogue lists of sources to answer the recurring enquiries,** e.g., suburban histories, local landmarks, etc. As well, I rough indexed the library's New Zealand pamphlets, New Zealand description and travel, and New Zealand history sections with an eye to future enquiries, and filed the results in the Reference Catalogue. Victoria College Library now has a similar Reference Catalogue, not, of course, confined to New Zea-

** After this system had been in force for three years I was visited (my first such experience in fifteen years) by a Government Inspector who informed me I was wasting my own and the Government's time in recording this information. It was some solace to me, that, as I had recently produced Nikolai Gogol's satire "The Government Inspector", I knew all about *them*. At the time of the inspector's visit (1950) I was working on an enquiry (and recording the results) of the recurring and disastrous flooding of the Wangaehu river caused by the overflowing of the crater lake on Mount Ruapehu!

land material, which includes many hundreds of references to information in the books and newspaper clippings of the Fildes and Stout special collections of New Zealand books.

This building on work done and minimising duplication of effort seems to me a cardinal point in any library's programme, and one which might be carried further in collaboration and co-ordination of effort between fellow librarians of New Zealand collections.

One of the major problems facing the research student is the accessibility of New Zealand works. To the Reference Librarian the rare New Zealand book bears the fascinating legend "*Drink Me*" but to the curator-librarian these magic letters often read "*Touch Not.*" Alice's vision remains the more abiding. It is easy to be contemptuous of this sitting on knowledge by the denial of free use of books in order to preserve their outward condition but the custodian of a New Zealand collection is torn between his duty as a librarian to help disseminate knowledge, to let in the light, and his concern for the preservation of rare material. The reference staff should, therefore, be increasingly aware of the contents of that rare material so that fruitless searching by many hands will not subject the volumes to constant wear and tear. Perhaps there is some further solution to the problem—a minimum number of copies of early New Zealand works kept in cold storage in a central reserve; or documentary reproduction of the more rare material in a collection, the copies of which would be available for open access to readers. Certainly the more indexes we make to these books the less need there will be to handle the books themselves unnecessarily.

The Reference Catalogue generally lists the unexpected source; it does not duplicate ground covered in the standard reference work or in a library's catalogue. For instance, the entry for G. A. Selwyn does not record any of the biographies or the references to be found in the index to Hocken's *Bibliography of New Zealand*, but the more elusive, sometimes fragmentary references in:*

Fremantle, E. R. The navy as I have known it. 1904.

Cracroft, Peter. Journal of Captain Cracroft, H.M.S. Niger. vol. 2, 1860-61.

Gambier, J. W. Links in my life on land and sea. 1907.

Mundy, G. C. Our Antipodes. 1852.

Dillon, C. A. The Dillon letters. 1954.

Godley, Charlotte. Letters from early New Zealand, 1850-53.

Young, Rev. R. The Southern world, 1854.

Wayte, G. Prospecting: or, Eighteen months in Australia and New Zealand. 1879.

Smythe, Mrs. S. M. Ten months in the Fiji Islands. 1864.

The Reference Catalogue, then, provides subject bibliographies in miniature.

To the one I am compiling at Victoria College, I have added New Zealand entries in periodicals not covered by the *Subject Index to*

New Zealand Periodicals or articles in periodicals published prior to 1941. Here also appear references to New Zealand-born authors like Sidney Goodsir Smith and E. O. Mousley whose names do not appear in standard N.Z. reference works. From many subject bibliographies in the library I have abstracted New Zealand references otherwise unrecorded. All this of course is a gradual process of noting passing references likely to be of use in the future.

Other guides to sources of information are portraits, obituaries, and illustrations indexes to New Zealand books and newspapers. At the Alexander Turnbull Library the Portrait index, begun some years before the Reference Catalogue and covering a wider range of books indexed, leads to many and obscure references to people in all ranks of life. An Illustrations index to New Zealand books and manuscripts also is an aid to research in local history of district, parish, or school.

Our second need is exchange of information between libraries doing similar work. We want to know what the other fellow is doing. If an indexing project is being done in Dunedin, let us know of it in Wellington. With so much to do, let us not waste opportunity by too much duplication of work.

Perhaps this seminar may give us the chance to learn and record what particular New Zealand reference aids each library is developing. Perhaps the National Library Centre could give us an information sheet that records indexes compiled, bibliographies made, a finding list of manuscripts, etc. We badly need some system of exchanging information and, where possible, reference aids. When indexes are made to rare books a copy might be sent to each library that houses a special New Zealand collection, or at least to each main city. The New Zealand subject bibliographies compiled by the Library School might be distributed in the same way. A Union list of manuscripts would be a useful guide for librarians and students. We appear to need an information bureau to serve libraries where New Zealand research is done. We want to know as well what material Australia has, and what work is being done there.

Our third need is to plan or co-ordinate our efforts so that among different libraries, as within a library, we have as little wasteful duplication as possible. This would be prevented in large measure by an information sheet and an exchange service of indexes, etc.

Indexes are wanted to early New Zealand books and pamphlets, periodicals, and newspapers (current as well as past, for the present is tomorrow's history). Perhaps the reference staff of public libraries could be responsible for the current newspapers and reference libraries for the past.

Newspapers play so great a part in research in New Zealand that I think that librarians should make a drive to have as complete a

*Selections from the Reference Catalogue at Victoria University College Library.

file as possible of at least one of a city's newspapers held in that city, either originals or microfilm copies. The lack of centralisation of holdings in a file is continually frustrating. In Auckland for instance we should expect to find as complete a file as possible of Auckland papers, but at present we must call on the British Museum, the Hocken, and the General Assembly libraries to fill the gaps.

As with newspapers, so with books and manuscripts, there is an urgent need for a co-ordinated plan to fill in the gaps so that the main sources for local history (or copies of these sources) are available locally. This is a matter of policy for chief librarians. Reference librarians can only record the constant frustration of incomplete holdings and a lack of clearly defined policy in remedying this.

Perhaps from this seminar there will grow a more closely knit association of those who share the same problems in the field of reference work in libraries with special New Zealand collections. Sharing and fighting these problems may draw us together to build firmly on the good work already done.



NATIONAL AND STATE LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT

A. G. W. DUNNINGHAM

(concluded)

Tennessee is the best example of a state which, in the past, set up state service depots similar to the Country Library Service depots in New Zealand, but which has now reached the stage where the libraries grouped around each of the depots will shortly be able to take over the service and administer it for themselves. Tennessee has an area about equal to that of the North Island, and it has a population of two millions. Almost the whole of the state has now been covered by nine large library regions. No library region in Tennessee has a population of less than 100,000. To each region the state assigns two trained librarians, two clerical assistants and a bookmobile. The regional librarian purchases with state-aid funds and co-ordinates his book selection with that of the co-operating counties. In four of the nine regions, regional library boards have already been established and in one region the counties are already pooling their funds for book buying and pooling funds for the employment of specialist staff. In